obviously expecting him. They sat so far away from us that I could not hear what they said. But the man handed something to Signor Vecchio, who gave him a large sum of money."

"That would have been the forged certificate!" the Duke exclaimed. "The blank which the priest had removed from the marriage register. What you have told me, Miss Hanley, has been very, very helpful, but we still have to prove it to be the truth."

"How are . . we to do . . that?" Luella asked.

"I am not certain," the Duke answered, "but your information will be of vital importance." He glanced down again at the marriage certificate. "I see that the priest who signed it is called 'Sebastian' and the marriage is supposed to have taken place seven years ago. I suppose he got the same man who is now helping Vecchio to blackmail me."

Luella had not noticed this when she had looked at the marriage certificate. Now she bent forward to look closer at it, and the Duke held it up in front of her. The name was somehow obscured, but it was undoubtedly Sebastian. "If Father Sebastian signed this seven years ago," Luella said, "perhaps by now he has retired, or else was dismissed."

"That is certainly a possibility," the Duke agreed, "and he would therefore be grateful to be cut in for a large sum of money, such as Vecchio hopes to extort from me."

He stopped for a moment, and then went on: "He believes I will pay it to prevent a scandal and prevent me too from becoming the father of an Italian child who I could never accept as my heir." Now there was

an angry note in the Duke's voice, as if even to speak of it was repulsive to him.

It seemed to Luella they were caught up in a web of intrigue and evil which enveloped them both. There apparently was to be no escape and she suddenly began to feel sorry for the Duke. He was young, he was handsome. It must have been very exciting for him suddenly to have become a man of such great importance. This plot would be a bombshell which would shatter his contentment as surely as if somebody had plunged a dagger into his heart.

"I am . . sorry . . terribly sorry," she said aloud.

"I can only say," the Duke replied, "that if I am to be involved in anything so unpleasant and disgraceful, I am fortunate to have you to help me." He shook his head before saying: "The child might have arrived simply with a courier, or perhaps with some Italian who was demanding a first instalment of the money Vecchio is trying to extort from me."

"I want to . . help you . . and I will . . help you in . . every way . . I can," Luella said.

"Then what I want you to do tomorrow," the Duke answered, "after you have rested, is to write down everything you can remember about this unpleasant business from start to finish."

"Yes . . of course I will . . do that," Luella promised.

Unexpectedly the Duke smiled, "As your father's daughter, you should be very eloquent about it."

"Did you really enjoy my father's book on the Greek temples?" Luella asked.

"I found it fascinating!" the Duke replied. "I went